

# ***IOWA OUTDOORS***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**www.iowadnr.com**

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**[Editor s Note: There is an electronic photo available for the Lake Pahoja article.  
Send an e-mail request to [mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us).]**

## **ABUNDANT CATFISH AWAIT THE LAKE PAHOJA ANGLER FOR 2003**

By Jim Berquist  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

I had just set down my pole and was overlooking the lake when I noticed another bite, I set the hook and 5 minutes later I landed a nice pan-sized catfish, my fifth of the night. I remember thinking as I gathered up my stringer of cats, ranging from 3 to 6 pounds, that it took me longer to drive to Lake Pahoja than to catch my limit of catfish.

Thanks to a long-term cage catfish program, conducted by the Lyon County Conservation Board, channel catfish have been very successful in Lake Pahoja. Located just north of Inwood, in northwest Iowa, the lake is readily known for its incredible panfish fishery, however, the abundant channel catfish population should not be overlooked in this 72-acre artificial impoundment.

“Lake Pahoja has an excellent population of 14 to 24-inch fish with good opportunities to catch large trophy sized fish,” said Jim Christianson regional fisheries biologist. “During past sampling seasons catchable sized channel catfish were sampled consistently in good numbers and again during the fall 2002 sample we observed large number of nice channel catfish, indicating an abundant population currently exists in Lake Pahoja.”

Lake Pahoja has excellent shoreline access for anglers. Best fishing success occurs on the south side of the lake, however good opportunities also exist on the north side. A new fishing pier recently completed by the Lyon County Conservation Board provides easy access. Fish near the numerous brush piles located throughout the lake. It would be a good idea to use heavy gear to withstand the “cats” runs into these excellent fish holding structures. Anglers can catch catfish throughout the year, with the best fishing occurring shortly after ice out and lasting through June. Traditional baits, such as stink bait, produce well; however, those seeking large trophy size fish should use cut baits extensively.

Lake Pahoja is an important part of the multi-use recreation of Lyon County. A decline of catfish anglers has been noted at Lake Pahoja and anglers are encouraged to take advantage of the hard fighting, excellent tasting fish that is readily available. Lake maps and other information on Lake Pahoja is available by calling the Lyon County Conservation at 712-753-2313 or the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (712-336-1840).

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## **CROSS COUNTRY SKIING**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Quick! Before it melts...

Too late.

A couple brief encounters with snow got their hopes up. In the end, though, cross country skiers could do little more than wish for more, as the cobwebs formed on their cold weather gear.

There was just enough white stuff for Joan Flecksing to test her ‘ski legs’ last week on Pleasant Creek Recreation Area in Linn County. As the park manager there, Flecksing gives it high marks for cross country skiing, and other winter activities. “Other activities slow down. It’s very tranquil and peaceful here in the winter months.”

Like many state parks, the telltale double tracks in the snow replace summer campfires or beach sand sculptures. It’s just that there hasn’t been much of it, yet. “I’ve seen where a few skiers have used the (north side) trail or the Osprey trail near the sailboat area on the other side of the lake,” recalls Lake Macbride State Park manager Ron Puettman. “The snowmobile trail had some use, too.”

With a winter that’s been more brown than white, it has become a waiting game. “We’ve been selling skis without snow,” says Ben Caskey, from Fin & Feather Outdoor

Store in Iowa City. “When we get hit with a week of snow, though, that’s when we get the rush.” Like other outlets, Caskey’s store offers rental equipment for novice cross country fans. If it’s something they want to pursue, they’ll move from rental to sales.

Like most hobbies, there’s a wide range of prices and gear. Unlike many, though, the basic gear is fairly simple. Caskey offers waxless, wide track skis. These would be entry level to moderate activity. Customers match up to 160, 175 or 190 centimeters length skis, depending on their size. He likes to see a bend in the arm about 10 degrees past 90 degrees, as a new skier grips his or her poles. “That depends on skill level, too. Beginners might want shorter poles, as they work to balance themselves,” suggests Caskey. “I like them a little longer, for more push; more distance.” He suggests ski boots be sized about like hiking boots; leaving a little bit of room. With bindings, a beginner can hit the trail with new equipment for about \$200.

More gets you more. Higher performance skis will command higher price tags. Waxless skis rely on a textured patten on the underside to ‘grip’ the snow for push off traction. Waxed skis tend to be favored by many experienced or competitive skiers. Different wax is used for different weather conditions; fresh powder, older crusted snow, even slush for instance.

Whether you’re racing or just stumbling along, the cross country allure varies from skier to skier. “It’s really not that difficult; in the sense that you can learn at your own pace. You don’t need to utilize the kind of areas that downhill skiers require.” Flecksing also points to the winter scenery during a nearly silent glide through the woods. “You’re going to see more wildlife when you’re out; a lot of squirrels, deer, turkeys and other wildlife. You may be in timber awhile, then wide open areas. That can make for a fairly exciting cross country skiing experience.”

“There are a lot of good areas to cross country ski around here,” agrees Caskey. “I like being out in the woods. It’s quiet; and beautiful. It’s sort of a faster way to hike.”

Parks, school grounds, golf courses and empty fields (with permission from private landowners of course) are available.

Just add snow.

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## **ICE FISHING FOR THE NON-ANGLER**

By Bob Castelline

Iowa Department of Natural Resource

You can’t imagine how many times I’ve heard the question.

“You work for the DNR, and you DON’T FISH?”

There’s something wrong with that, I know. It’s kind of like a surgeon who can’t stand the sight of blood, or a trapeze artist with acrophobia. I once knew a newspaper reporter who didn’t like talking to people. You know what I’m talking about. Working for the DNR and not fishing just doesn’t seem right.

So when Mick Klemesrud, the DNR’s energetic outdoor information guy, asked me to go ice fishing with him? Well, let’s just say it took some convincing.

Don’t get me wrong: Mick is perhaps the most enthusiastic angler I’ve ever known, and a great spokesman for fishing in our state. But let’s not forget his audience. We’re talking about the “garbage guy,” the one who tries to convince Iowans of the importance of waste management. A guy who thoroughly hates being cold. A guy who, as a teenager spending stifling summers at his cousin’s Minnesota fishing resort, was routinely relegated to the corner of the pontoon, given a broken-down rod and reel, and told, “Catch a fish, boy.”

I had a better chance of catching a cold. I don’t even remember if they gave me bait.

Mick had worked on me for weeks, trying to convince me of ice fishing’s many virtues — about how enjoyable it is as a social activity, about how you really don’t get all that cold because you have a shack and a kerosene heater (and usually some liquid warmth), about how simple it really is to catch fish. I was beginning to cave, but I still hadn’t made the commitment.

Then came the clincher: Mick told me we’d be on the radio as part of an outdoor show.

Radio. Now there’s a great medium. I’ve always had a fascination with radio. Growing up, we had a single black-and-white television and no remote. Frankly, watching reruns of Lawrence Welk with my parents just didn’t put the zippidy-doo-da in my day. So radio became my escape. I listened to it for hours, late into the night, with Jim Zabel babbling endlessly about Iowa athletics, a breeze blowing through my bedroom window while the crickets chirped in the background.

Ice fishing on the radio? I was hooked like a crappie on a chartreuse jig.

And so Mick and I went fishing, on February 10, meeting up with Fisheries Bureau Chief Marion Conover. As we approached Badger Creek, I was brimming with anticipation. Would I catch anything? If so, would it be enough to have a good meal? Would I learn firsthand about fish and habitat and habits?

And, most important, would I lose my extremities to frostbite?

I needn't have worried. Even though I felt a little like Frankenstein staggering across the ice with a creeper on only my right boot — tromp, drrraaaaggg, tromp, drrraaaaggg (although I can't imagine trying to navigate my way with NO creepers) — the experience was thoroughly enjoyable. We didn't catch a lot of fish, but I did manage the finest catch of the day, a whopping 14-inch bluegill.

OK, a 12-inch bluegill.

OK, it was eight inches, but it was a magnum!

The truth is, I'm sold. Ice fishing is a tremendously enjoyable activity. Certainly it didn't hurt to be out there taping a radio segment, cheesy as my banter must have sounded. And it didn't hurt to be out there with Mick and Marion, two tremendously knowledgeable and gracious hosts. But I'll be going on my own just as soon as I can get my own equipment, which, by the way, doesn't have to cost a lot. For about \$60, a person could have all the basics — auger, fishing rod, jigs, wax worms and a five-gallon bucket is about all you need. Oh yes, and WARM clothing.

What I like most about ice fishing, however, is that it's for everyone. As Marion Conover said, "It's the great equalizer." You don't have to be an expert fisherman. You don't need a \$20,000 bass boat or a lot of electronic fish-finding equipment. All you need is the basics and a little knowledge of where fish like to hang out. No drifting in the wind. Once you find them, you just sit over top of them and catch fish.

Even a waste management publicity guy can handle that. And it's a heck of a lot better than the sunburns I used to catch on my cousin's resort.

So even if you've never been ice fishing (or any kind of fishing, for that matter), give it a try. Go with a friend who ice fishes so you can learn the ropes a little bit. You're never too old to start.

Take it from me, an ex-non-fishing Iowan.

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## **REGULATIONS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET**

DES MOINES – Regulations covering All-Terrain Vehicles and snowmobiles for 2003 is available on the Iowa DNR's website at [www.iowadnr.com](http://www.iowadnr.com). Click on the Conservation Law Enforcement link, then on recreational safety/education programs. The information is available in a printable format.

The regulations will be available later this spring or early summer in booklet form and will include any additional rule changes.

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# ***IOWA FISHING REPORT***

**For the week of February 18, 2003**

**www.iowadnr.com**

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report. Ice fishing reports will be released every week while quality ice conditions exist.

## **Northwest**

Reminder: The walleye, muskellunge and northern pike season closed Feb. 15 on Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji, Dickinson County

**Spirit Lake** (Dickinson): Yellow perch fishing has been fair. Anglers are using minnows, wax worms or wigglers on lures from pilkees to teardrops. The south side of Spirit and the Buffalo Run area have been good. The North Grade is producing good panfish action in the old lily pad area. The bluegill bite has been sporadic in Anglers Bay and in the old lily pad area of the North Grade.

**West Okoboji** (Dickinson): Crappies are slow, but some are being caught in Miller's Bay and in Smith's Bay. Bluegill fishing is excellent in Smith's Bay and in the north end of the lake. Bluegills are starting to be caught in Miller's Bay. Teardrops with a wiggler or wax worm seem to be the preferred bait. Yellow perch fishing is slow. Some perch are being caught on teardrops and a wiggler or wax worm in Smith's Bay. Some perch are also being caught in Miller's Bay.

**Badger Lake** (Webster): Fishing is good for 8 to 9-inch crappies on live minnows early in the morning. Bluegills are good on teardrops tipped with a wax worm. The bluegills are averaging 7-1/2 to 8-1/2 inches.

**Black Hawk Lake** (Sac): Bluegill and catfish are fair, fishing off the rock piles and Ice House Point, using teardrops tipped with wax worms. A few walleyes are being caught in the evening hours. Anglers need to use caution. There is open water on the north side and in the Dennison Beach area.

**Clear Lake** (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing is fair. The best activity is between 5:30 and 8:30 p.m. Jigging spoons tipped with minnow heads are working best.

**Indian Lake** – Eldred Sherwood Park (Hancock): Bluegill fishing is good using a small jig tipped with wax worms. Some sorting is required, but 7 to 8-inch fish are available.

**For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.**

## **Southwest**

**Three Mile** (Union): Crappie and walleyes, with a few larger ones, are being caught on minnows at brush piles at lower and at the upper ends of lake. Bluegills are good using wax worms early morning and evening hours in flooded timber near

roadbeds. Ice thickness varies from 6 to 10 inches, with some open water areas that the waterfowl are keeping open, so be careful.

**Twelve Mile** (Union): Ice thickness varies from 6 to 10 inches with some open water areas, so be careful. Fishing is good for walleyes, bluegill, crappie and small yellow bass on minnows and wax worms in early morning and evening hours in flooded timber or areas northeast of the west dock.

**Fogle** (Ringgold): Fishing is excellent for 6 to 8-inch bluegills, and for channel catfish and crappies using wax worms in flooded timber and brush piles.

**Icaria** (Adams): Channel catfish and largemouth bass are good on wax worms and minnows.

**Green Valley** (Union): Crappie and bluegill fishing is fair in the east arm. Fishing is good for catfish.

**Badger Creek** (Madison): Fishing is generally slow. The best action for bluegill and crappie is in the morning and evening.

**West Lake Osceola** (Clarke): Bluegill and crappie are fair. The best action is in the morning and evening.

**Little River** (Decatur): Fishing is good for bluegill, crappie, and walleye in flooded timber areas near the creek channel.

**Slip Bluff** (Decatur): Bluegills and crappies are good beside flooded trees.

**Big Creek Lake** (Polk): Bluegill fishing has been spotty in the main lake, with some fish caught in the “Lost Lake” area using small tear-drops or kastmasters baited with wax worms. Crappies are slow to fair, with the best fishing around daybreak and after dark in deeper water using minnows on bare hooks. Walleye fishing has been good using kastmasters and other small jigging spoons. Most walleyes are below the legal length limit.

**Don Williams** (Boone): Crappie fishing is fair with most anglers using wax worms and minnows. Some bluegill and bass are being caught, but overall fishing has been slow.

**Lake Ahquabi** (Warren): Bluegill and redear fishing has been slow to fair using wax worms. A few crappies are being caught, but overall it has been slow. Some channel catfish are also being taken with teardrops and wax worms; fish just off the bottom.

**Hooper Lake** (Warren): Some bluegill and redear have been caught with most fish in 12 to 15 feet of water.

**Rock Creek** (Jasper): Crappie fishing has been slow using wax worms and minnows. Ice conditions have been spotty with some areas of thin ice near the dam.

**Easter Lake** (Polk): Crappie fishing has remained slow. Most anglers are using wax worms. A few largemouth bass have been taken along the face of the dam.

**Hickory Grove Lake** (Story): Fishing is slow to fair. Anglers are catching a few crappies and some smaller bluegills using small jigs tipped with wax worms.

**Orient** (Adair): Fishing is good for crappies up to 12 inches. Use minnows and fish in front of the dam.

**Greenfield** (Adair): Bluegill are good using jigs tipped with wax worms fished around structure in 10 to 20 feet of water. Ice thickness varies from 10 to 12 inches.

**Viking** (Montgomery): Bluegill and crappie are good using teardrops tipped with wax worms and minnows. The best action is early in the morning and again before sunset.

**Manawa** (Pottawattamie): Anglers are catching bluegill near tin can dike using teardrops tipped with wax worms. Channel catfish were caught on jig tipped with wax worms and/or minnows.

**Willow** (Harrison): Bluegills are good on wax worms.

**Farm Ponds:** Ice fishing is good for bluegill on wax worms. Ice thickness varies from 5 to 10 inches.

**For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.**

### **Southeast**

**Mississippi River Pools 16 19:** Backwater areas of the Mississippi on Pools 16 – 19 continue to have solid ice conditions. Anglers should use caution in deep water areas of **Big Timber** in Pool 17 or any place water current may exist. Anglers are catching a lot of smaller bluegills and crappies in **Big Timber** and **Hidden Acres** on Pool 17. In Pool 18 the bluegill fishing is good in **Bell s Pocket**.

**Lake Odessa** (Louisa): Bluegills are still biting in Sand Run. Try fishing in the stump fields at the lower end of the Run for fish that have not seen as much pressure as the fish in areas around the boat ramp.

**Lake Darling** (Washington): Crappies were being caught around the cedar tree piles in the middle of the lake last week. Jigs tipped with a minnow seem to be working the best.

**Lake Rathbun** (Appanoose): Crappies continue to bite on small tube jigs and minnows. Atwell's, Southfork, and other coves with submerged structure have been the most productive.

**Lake Miami** (Monroe): Bluegills and crappies have been biting on jigs tipped with wax worms.

**Lake Keomah** (Mahaska): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with wax worms. Use caution because there is still some open water in areas the geese have been using.

**Lake Sugema** (Van Buren): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with wax worms or minnows. Late afternoon and evening have been the most productive times.

**Lake Macbride** (Johnson): Anglers continue to catch crappies throughout the lake and the area around the power lines. Some sorting is required for larger fish. The bigger crappies are being caught on larger lures tipped with minnows. Anglers are also reporting catching a few walleyes.

**Diamond Lake** (Poweshiek): Crappie Fishing continues to be fair in the morning and evenings. An occasional bluegill is also being caught. Anglers are reminded that minnow usage is prohibited in this lake.

**Pleasant Creek** (Linn): Fishing has been slow for panfish. Some fish are being caught on the west end and near the dam.



**Coralville Reservoir** (Johnson): Crappie fishing has slowed. Some anglers have had decent success on crappies, while others report slow fishing. Crappies are biting light on teardrops tipped with wax worms or minnows.

**For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.**

### **Northeast**

**Volga Lake** (Fayette): Bluegills are good in the mornings and evenings fishing near deep brush piles.

**Lake Meyer** (Winneshiek): Fishing is good for small to medium sized bluegills.

For current information on trout fishing during the winter, call the **Manchester Trout Hatchery** at 563-927-5736, the **Big Spring Hatchery** at 563-245-1699 and the **Decorah Hatchery** at 563-382-3315.

**For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.**

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